

Norman Baker MP
Great Minster House
76 Marsham Street
London
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30 June 2010

Dear Norman

Thank you for the opportunity to meet last week and discuss the enthusiasm of local authorities in the South East to build upon the work of the Transport Board; an approach that we agreed was entirely consistent with the coalition Government's commitment to a radical devolution of power.

I found our meeting useful and am pleased that I have the opportunity to meet with your officials in early July to discuss matters in further detail.

Over the next few weeks I will be discussing with my colleagues in local authorities across the South East how we might continue to advise (on a collective basis) the Department on investment priorities.

During the course of our meeting I touched on a couple of the schemes in the South East's investment programme. However there are a number of schemes where the Transport Board is clear that a failure to secure funding now leaves the scheme at risk. Moreover in some instances the funding from the Transport Board acts as a lever to secure from other sources; there is thus a high opportunity cost if the schemes fail to be delivered.

Gatwick Airport Station

In March 2010, partners agreed a funding package that would enable additional platform capacity to be delivered at Gatwick Airport Station. This makes the most of the programmed re-signalling works that are due to take place in the Gatwick area; failure to make the most of this opportunity will mean that the chance to remove this bottleneck on the Brighton Mail Line will have been lost for a further 20-30 years.

The package included a £5.8m contribution from the Department for Transport (through the RFA programme), together with contributions from BAA, West Sussex County Council and Crawley Borough Council. A letter confirming the availability of Department for Transport funds was sent to me by the previous Secretary of State on the 6 April 2010. (copy enclosed)

All the parties involved in discussions have expressed the strongest possible desire to deliver the additional capacity. Early confirmation of the funding from the RFA programme is needed to enable Network Rail to proceed with detailed design work.

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Oxford Station Improvements

Delivery of an additional south facing bay platform at Oxford Station has been identified by Network Rail as offering significant operational benefits. A key part of the scheme is linking the new platform into the existing station building. The strategic significance of Oxford Station in the South East's transport system has been acknowledged by the Transport Board. Accordingly a contribution of £5m has been identified towards the cost of the scheme.

The Transport Board's funding will in turn unlock funding from Network Rail that is earmarked from within the settlement for the current Control Period. With pressure increasing on the capacity through Oxford Station confirmation of the Transport Board's funding will enable progress to be made with this scheme.

M27 Junction 5

Proposals for £3.5m of improvements to the M27 Junction 5 were sent to the Department in March 2010. This junction is strategically important as it provides access to Southampton Airport, the parkway station, as well as Eastleigh Riverside, the single largest brownfield employment site in the South East.

Improvements to the junction are required in order to support local authorities' collective ambition for this part of Urban South Hampshire. The scope of the works required has been agreed with the Highways Agency. Funding to deliver the scheme will bring together a number of funding streams – including Hampshire County Council and CLG Growth Point funding. Confirmation of the virement for the contribution from the Transport Board funding is sought as soon as possible in order to ensure this enabling work is completed at the earliest opportunity.

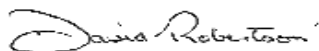
Reading Station

Enhancements to Reading Station are funded through the High Level Output Specification and will take place over the next six years. The highways elements required for the station enhancements are funded through the RFA programme. This contribution is required to enable adequate local highway capacity around the station, in particular to facilitate future work to improve the public transport interchange at the station. The Transport Board requests that funding for these works are made available as soon as possible.

At the meeting of the Transport Board in June, the Board also reaffirmed its support for the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road, seen as a critical element of the five-point plan to regenerate this part of the Sussex Coast. Mindful of the announcement that decisions on major schemes will not be taken until after the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review, I urge you to take into account the Transport Board's continued support for this scheme when a decision is taken on the Orders for this scheme.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to meet you last week and I look forward to working with you in the future.

Yours sincerely



Cllr. David Robertson
Chairman, South East England Transport Board.

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